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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Friday, October 23, 1936

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "FOWLS ARE A GOOD FALL BUY." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture. Bulletin available, No. 1762-F, "Home Canning of Fruits, Vegetables and Meats."

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Homemakers, I have some welcome news for you. As many of you may have noticed, prices for chickens of all kinds are three to six cents a pound lower than they were this time last year for the same kinds of poultry. These lower prices are likely to continue through the fall, according to this week's Market Basket release from the Bureau of Home Economics of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, because all classes of chickens are plentiful in the markets just now. This means not only the regular commercial supply, but the older hens that are weeded out of the home flocks because they are poor layers that will not "earn their keep" through the winter.

Birds of fowl size and age, the bureau says, are a thrifty buy because they have the largest proportion of meat to bony structure. They require long slow cooking with liquid added to make them tender. That is, they can be stewed, or simmered, or braised, or cooked in a casserole. By good management a large stewing chicken can sometimes be made to stretch over two meals.

Some poultry dealers always carry Government graded chickens. Others stock them from time to time, especially if their trade demands graded poultry. In selecting chickens at the store you may not find these Government grades marked on the individual birds, because the custom is to stamp the grades on the box or barrel which the customer does not see. If the dealer has graded poultry he'll probably mention it.

"U.S. Grade A" or "U.S. Prime", and "U.S. Grade B" or "U.S. Choice" are the grades commonly offered the housewife at retail markets. The difference between Grade A and Grade B is chiefly one of degree of fleshing, appearance, and minor surface defects, such as pinfeathers or a slightly crooked breastbone, which do not affect the eating quality. Either grade will be satisfactory on the table.

Some dealers have facilities for keeping live chickens on hand, dressing them from day to day as ordered. This is "fresh-killed" poultry. Others handle fresh-dressed poultry that has been frozen only long enough to allow it to be carried to market in good condition. The term "fresh-chilled" is used for these birds. A great deal of the poultry in large city markets is fresh chilled, or it could not be handled. There are also a number of hard frozen, or cold storage chickens offered for sale. I am told that recent improvements in methods of handling and storing many kinds of foods includes chickens, and consumer doubts about the merits of storage and frozen poultry are disappearing.



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Perhaps you live on a farm in one of the States where individual freezer lockers are in wide use. Have you thought of sending the surplus home-dressed hens to your "safety deposit box" along with other meats? Or you may prefer to conserve the non-layers for the winter table in cans or jars. I have mentioned the new canning bulletin quite recently, but I'll remind you again that it contains a new section on the subject of canning meats and chicken. The canning specialists recommend the steam pressure canner as the only safe method of processing either meats or chicken. (In case you have not sent for a copy, the number is 1752-F, and the title is "Home Canning of Fruits, Vegetables, and Meats.")

Of course if you live in the city you have no chickens out in the yard to can or have frozen. You have to depend on buying poultry over the counter, judging its quality as best you can. If the dealer cannot assure you of Government grades, look for fowls with fine-grained flesh, well-distributed on the breast, with the carcass well covered with fat. The skin should be soft and glossy. The bird should be well-bled, well-dressed, and practically free of pin-feathers, with an empty crop. Flesh bruises, skin abrasions, discolorations, crooked bones or other deformities lower the quality, but may be merely surface defects.

If you select a four or five pound fowl, bear in mind that when it is drawn and ready to cook it will weigh about 25 per cent less than it did on first weighing. Then the actual weight of meat, when taken from the bones, will be still less. However, you may be able to serve one-half the chicken as a fricassee or chicken pie, and then use the remainder, removed from the bones, for chicken shortcake, chicken a la king, chicken with noodles, or one of the minced chicken dishes such as chicken rizotto, chop suey, chicken timbales, chicken croquettes, or a curry. The broth will make fine gravy and will be useful in any one of these dishes.

Another good way of cooking an older bird is in a casserole. The lid should fit tightly to hold in steam for long slow cooking. The juices are all retained in the gravy and the seasonings penetrate the pieces of chicken, giving them a fine flavor. Here's a recipe from the Bureau of Home Economics:

#### Casserole of Fowl with Vegetables

3 carrots	2 tablespoons butter or other fat
1 bunch celery	1 cup hot water
1 onion	1 cup hot milk
1 green pepper	1-1/2 tablespoons flour
4 or 5 pound fowl	

Slice or chop the vegetables in very small pieces. Cut up the fowl, season with salt and pepper, dust with flour, and brown delicately in the fat. As the meat is removed from the frying pan, place it in a casserole. Pour the chopped vegetables into the frying pan and let them absorb the browned fat. Then transfer them to the casserole, add a cup of hot water, and cook in a slow oven (275 degrees Fahrenheit) for 3 hours, or longer if the fowl is very tough. Add more water from time to time if necessary. Just before serving, remove the pieces of fowl, and add the milk and flour, which have been mixed. Cook for ten minutes longer and pour the vegetable sauce over the chicken, or replace it in the sauce and serve from the casserole.

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